Brookline 2nd month 29. 1885

Surely he hath born our griefs: ——— —
and with his stripes we are healed.
Isaiah 53 — 4 and 5.

Most human thought, as yet, confines itself within the limits of two incomplete positions, for either of which the idea of vicarious suffering is too large, and into which it can be crowded only by pinching and narrowing its true proportions. That contest between priest and prophet, which is the thread upon which most of the Hebrew history is strung, continues down to our time, - an opposition between those who look upon the world through the different tendencies of religion, on one side, and morality, on the other; and by this opposition all christian doctrine has been more or less distorted. When Christ came he was neither a prophet nor a priest, after the manner of those who had gone before him, but stood in a place entirely above the region in which the two elements of the life of his people had or often met for fierce dispute. His truth still affords us a spiritual point of view, ~~from which is still in his thought a point of view to be attained~~, from which the inconsistencies

of the ~~doctrine~~ idea of atonement, as held by lower schools of thought stand clearly exposed, and where there is seen to be a greater truth in the idea of vicarious suffering than has found expression through the creeds of Christendom, - The religion of priests, is always founded upon the assumption that there is some exceptional - miraculous way, whereby the favor of heaven can be secured for men, and the consequences of their weakness or misdoing can be averted. This habit of mind arising upon the mission of Christ, and the things said of him by his earliest followers, has made of his ~~life~~ suffering and death the one sacrifice paid to remove the curse of God from ~~the~~ a helpless world. The church, so far as it has based itself upon this theory of Christ's work, has sunk into superstitions; which differ in no essential particular from those of the fetich

worshipper who protects himself against calamity by amulets and charms.- There is nothing to which a reasonable soul can subscribe; nothing which connects itself with the facts of life as we know them, in the belief that Christ's suffering has availed to turn aside the torrent of divine anger and change God's hostile into a beneficent intent. As thus stated, the doctrine upon which the power of priestcraft has been largely built, is a mere travesty of christian truth, and is sustained only by that superstitious dread of unknown evils, which is entirely pagan ~~I know not what preacher said~~ and not at all christian in its character.- (As the Brahmin continues to recite the prayers of his ancestors, after they have ceased to be intelligible to him, simply because he fears that his failure to do this will ~~incite~~ leave him a target for the wrath of the gods, so half the christian world accepts this false idea of the efficacy of

Christ's death, to make itself safe from wholly superstitious terrors, which the Gospel would have now entirely banish from their thought.

The moralists of the Church have tried their powers of interpolation and adaptation upon the idea set forth in early Christian writings, with the result of transforming it into a sad misrepresentation of the divine nature and purpose. Adopting as the basis of their reasoning a hard and half brutal notion of justice, - that it consists in measuring out a certain penalty, for no other end than its own satisfaction, they have developed the doctrine, that since mankind, even by an eternity of wretchedness, could not meet the demands of the laws they had broken, Christ came to satisfy, in his own person, the bond and allow the hopeless debtors to go free. ~~which called for so much suffering; and allow the hopeless debtors, to go free~~. - Here again, Christian thought has wandered far away from

the real facts and ~~better~~ higher instincts of our life. It is nothing better than a barbaric justice which punishes without remedial intent, or which lays upon the offender so heavy a hand that he is rendered incapable of lifting himself to a ~~better~~ happier life. Justice is not vengeance, though there are still many souls which cherish vindictive wrath and pride, under the delusion that thus they prove their own integrity. What is there in the mind of God that answers to our thought of goodness, if He knowingly launches against His children penalties that ~~—~~ they cannot face, and which only drive them deeper into sin and misery? What is heaven's justice but a name, if allowing the guilty to escape, it can respond its tortures upon the innocent heart, and feel that its requirements are thus answered? Let us leave these lower standpoints of traditional religion and visionless

morality, to take the higher spiritual position on which all the thought of Christ is based, and when alone his intent can be adequately measured. ~~And in order that we may raise our minds to that true christian plane, let us drop, both the reasonable assumption that the Holy spirit comes through some divinely established form, and~~ Let us drop the pharisaic notion that all the sequence of life can be converted into terms of personal guilt or virtue. The Counsellors of Job have always plenty of representatives among men, to assure them that their suffering has but one spring, that of moral delinquency. But the suffering host will remain unalterably of Jobs opinion, that viewed in the light of a punishment, its distresses are more than it has deserved. It cannot be made to appear morally right and fit, for example, that children should

be forced to suffer for the sins of their parents, committed before they were brought into the world; and to justify the laws of God which compel them to show the results of ancestral transgressions, we must seek some larger method of interpreting God's design.

Let us put out of our minds all these poor theories of the understanding, and appeal to the facts of our own consciousness.- They will take us at once to the side of Christ; and will declare to us, that neither are we here to eat and sleep in peace, by keeping up the practice of religious rites, nor to copy forever, certain fixed maxims of conduct, which may lose all inspired meaning; but to bring out in our lives, among the fluctuating conditions of existence, those great qualities of soul-manifested in Christ, whose light is our only divine illumination,-- When we see that likeness

to God, as his nature is revealed through Christ
is the true object of christian endeavor, then
we shall also see that as children of God,
~~we do not stand so independent one of another~~
~~as before a legal tribunal, but~~ we are made
by our very situation partakers of a common
wealth or poverty in spiritual estate. So far as
the formal duties of life are concerned, we have
each one his punishment or reward, without
reference to the action of others. But as
spiritual beings we reflect each upon his fellows
the light or darkness that may be in us, and thus
help to cloud or enlighten the divine image
in other hearts. The attributes and qualities
that we would fain put on, we must win
together, if we would have them in their perfection;
for in spiritual life we are members one of
another, striving not only as individuals but as
a family, a race, toward the better life opened to

our view. - God has bound us so closely together in our higher interests, that the good of each one is in large measure dependent upon the welfare of all; and in order to secure our own salvation, we must contribute some help to the godlike impulses of our fellow men. - What then, in such an existence as this, is the meaning of vicarious suffering? It is the labor and the sorrow, the expense of sympathy, of tireless love and long baffled hope - that it costs those who have seen the better truth and realized a nobler life, to open other eyes and strengthen other hearts. They who have pushed forward in the path of life to those heights where a fair land of promise breaks upon their view, find that they cannot go on by themselves to enter into its possession. There are ties binding them to their weaker and blinder brethren, which they cannot break. -

Heaven would not be heaven, ~~to~~ to their souls, while they were forced to carry the memory of that hopeless worthlessness. Shut ~~out from~~ outside its holy, if they try to take the wings of the spirit and escape from the sight of worlds unhappiness, the very endeavor so weights their minds with sufferings, that they cannot rise. However long the soul may stand, thus balancing between earth and heaven, longing to cast itself home from its entanglement with a lower life, and vainly seeking to grasp the peace that is meant only for all, it comes at last that its fetters are chained; until it goes back to those whom it has left behind, assumes a part of their burdens, takes upon itself ~~a part~~ something of their chastisement, and ~~suffers~~ labors with and for them to ~~accomplish~~ work out their ~~deliverance~~ salvation. The suffering we may voluntarily assume to accomplish another, nearer or dearer, ~~is shown~~ gives us a clue to the true significance

of the marvellous work wrought by Christ.
Every hand must still bear its own burden, whatever
help we ~~may~~ extend to it; but this help may make
all the difference between a crushing weight, and one
that it is possible to ~~carry~~ lift. We have no need to
seek for ourselves, or to devise for the ~~Son of God~~
this impossible task of ~~lifting~~ discharging all the part of life
that humanity must carry. But though we may
not wholly relinquish the care of other minds, we
are continually making their sorrows our own, by
every act of friendly sympathy: and if we stand
by our brother's side, with heart and hand at his
service, to assist him out of the soil pit into
which he has fallen, we are working and suffering
in his place. Vicarious or delegated sorrow, as
a substitution of one life for another to receive
the penalty of unpaid debts, the voice of heaven
nowhere permits. But vicarious labor and pain
as that which the noble soul undertakes to endure

or assist the ignoble to rise and pursue the
way whither God has called them, is demanded of all
who would follow Christ. The gallant sailor who
has reached the crumbling wreck, to which a
benumbed figure clings for life, cannot take upon
himself alone all the peril of rescue. — Each must
pass through the waves at the risk of being drowned.
~~at the risk of being drowned~~,
their — & the shore. What the more can do, is
to make his strongest swim in place of the others
exhausted energies, and give out with his courage
the others lack of resolution; and if he saves out
of the dangerous shock of the sea, the life that
he has imperilled his own to rescue, this glory
is as great as if he had been able to spare that
other all danger and discomfort.

So we belittle the work of the great
Redeemer of men by refusing to ascribe to it
the magical efficacy upon which superstition depends,
~~and~~ or by limiting it with the limitation of all unselfish

living? Not so, - The secret of all miracles is that the grief which separates soul from soul may at any time be crossed by the kindling vital covenant, & whoso touch their hands up to life, - we hold up the Power of Christ as our symbol and evidence for all time, that the might of God is in a holy and disinterested love, and that its sacrifices do triumphantly avail to break and break its bonds, - We add nothing to the glory of his name, by representing his influence ~~as artificial potential to help out its display~~, to be different in kind from that which surrounds ~~the same he is cut off from the living world, and from~~ belongs to the spirit of devoted self-sacrifice, It is the ~~the forces by which all must~~ fact that he so grasped the possible extent of his influence, and so thoroughly and trustfully committed himself to its power, as to quicken the universal heart of man with new life and hope, that displays the greatness of his soul above every other born into the world. His nature and example are divine, in fact as well as in

name, which they (as we can find it nowhere else) the living way
to God through humility and obedience and faith.

Surely he hath borne our griefs. Not for
the peace of his own pure spirit did he leave
the quiet life in which he had been nurtured
to enter upon the miserable stormy and tragic
career. Not to carry out the plans of a personal
ambition did he endure the contradiction of sinners
and walk daily among the ready plots formed
against him. Not his the sorrows that overwhelming his soul beneath the pitying stars that
looked down upon Gethsemane. Not his the
fault or the weakness for which he was
scourged and crucified, as a public enemy, ~~by United Romans~~.
His only offence was, that the sound of a voice
groaning and travailing in pain, had filled his
heart with divine pity; and the command of God
having reached his soul, "Go forth and accomplish
the deliverance of thy people," he had received

to give his life, without reserve or evasion
to strengthen and inspire the hearts of men;
Because he had pleased himself when the arrows
of pain flew thickest, saying to his fellows, "See
them, they are not fatal! they come to some! and
this is a heaven beyond, to which they do not
reach;" for this, the haughty Lord of the land, who
bound gracious burdens upon the weak, and would
not lift a finger for their help, but met him
with merciless persecution; Because whenever
there was an aching heart, there was he to
spend his rich life for its comfort; whenever
a soul had hardened itself against God, there
went his commanding voice, bidding it turn
and pray; because he had labored ceaselessly
to ease the heaviest of all yokes, which the
fettered soul must wear, and to put into
the minds of men a new thought of the
life by which they were surrounded; for this,

at last, his reward was a death of cruelty and shame. They were our sorrows, not his own, that rolled in like a flood upon his mighty heart. He stooped to take upon himself the griefs of the lowest of human kind; to enter the darkest cave in which a lost child of God was vainly seeking shelter from the elements; to show by sympathy the utmost pang that remorse, or fear, or fond regret could inflict, that all souls whom he could reach, or induce others to reach, should feel themselves befriended and helped. When else in the annals of mankind, has the very spirit of love, ~~love of God~~ so incarnated itself in our mortal flesh, casting out every kind of selfishness, and taking every form of life into the embrace of a boundless charity? From what other heart has flowed such streams of blessing to encircle the world with this life-giving power? What other voice has touched so deeply, or could so

pendants for ages yet to come. The spirit
that has need of counsel and support in its struggle
for a higher and more peaceful life; whatever
amount of kind and enlightening admonition may
be given to his cause, they who have been really
touched and enlightened by his words, know that
he owns his supreme place to no fiction or
delusion, - He who has borne a world's grief
upon his spotless soul; - who saw as no one
else has seen, down by his feet, the hidden
sources of its fears and miseries and iniquities,
and where to apply his healing touch to turn
its darkness into health, does not hold his known
in its effections formed by chance, - - He has felt
all our pains. When utter sympathy reaches
out a little way towards the depths of our
troubled minds, how was one, who, standing by
our side, would know as we ourselves know
the secret thing, which robs us of our peace,

So is a certain, real moral sense, he is
standing by our side; and through the words of
judgment and forgiveness he has spoken, remains
the friend and helper to cheer and incite, all
who make of him a living presence in their
lives. Still he is chief of all, the lord and teacher
among his followers, because he is the servant
of every aspiring, burdened heart; who asks only
that he may help to raise its thought
and hope toward God.

Christ by his stripes we are healed, - it
was not in vain that he suffered and died;
but when his life went out upon the cross,
there was a new life in the souls of men. -
In no other way could he clearly reveal
them whom he wished to save, and speak
to them as from heart to heart, save by
entering that gloomy mist of pain in which
they dwell. - Thus speaking, even the echoes

of his voice, which lingered, after he had sealed with his blood the utter truth and faith of his purpose, was laden with an influence that no word of philosophy, ~~could~~ delivered outside the heavy atmosphere of sorrow, could exert. Whosoever would speak with authority must speak out of his own experience; and it was because Jesus did suffer with men, that he understood their need. He knew the bottom ground of their wilderness, through which he assumed to direct their feet, and was not merely acting them to fellow-pilgrims which he had never explored. He had measured the difficulties and sounded the trials of the Promised Land through which the pilgrimage of human souls can lie, and only bade men follow where he had gone before. — Surely, if any lost wanderer were ever saved by the bleeding feet ~~that~~ which had tracked him

over desolate mountain sides; if ever one come to the scene of the punishing, by braving all their fatigue and privation, only with slower heart and clearer eye, - we may say of the great Captain of our Salvation, by his stripes, we are healed. - Plenty of good advice the world shall always have, but none too many of those who are ready actually to seek the lost and forsaken, where alone they are to be found. Much theorising abounds as to how the world is to be made better, but the difficulty is to find hands which can endure the cost of winning any other life to put forth its noblest energies. - There is no way, save that which Christ has glorified, the way of voluntary suffering, - to draw the world, or any portion of it, into higher and more charitable ways of living. We have first to feel for others, how the kindest deeds may foolishly cherish rankle in their minds; how distrust; and how desire, and impotence of

will forever cheat them of a promised joy;
how their better impulses like flowers trodden into
the mire vainly try to turn their face toward
the light; some days sorrow for all this must
take hold upon our hearts, and we must
be prepared for many a hard rebuff - before we
can fit to do, in our homes, or among strangers -
any christlike work. - The cost is great, to buy
those treasures of heaven by which we counted
ourselves poor. But - then is after all no waste
of honest, devoted toil; Every sigh of the tireless
pitying heart; every blow of anger or malice
that he patiently encounters, will at length count
towards the establishment of his truth and the
redemption of souls; ~~And this God has bargained~~
~~with his children for a fixed price to be paid in~~
~~the coin of tears; but how~~ The infinite love
alone only succeeds with men by long kindness and
forbearance; and God not only grants to Christ and
~~because God grants~~ to us, the privilege

of showing his creative labours, ~~and~~ but carefully
garners every influence that assists the advancement
of his Kingdom; more than the spinning of a selfish
~~nature~~ heart over its baffled schemes - can degrade, the
sorrowing of a noble mind for the ~~little~~ lack of
love and faith, ~~so~~ also the world, which gives it
birth; That sorrow is itself, a well in the desert,
~~in~~ about which there ~~springs up~~ arises a shade from the
scorching heats. Wherever there is soulfull pity
~~for~~ of men for men, there is a spring of generous
life, ~~that~~ which no withering fire of scorn or
contempt shall drink up; - One such spring
God has unsealed, beyond all others in the purity
of its waters, and the abundance of its flow. -
No, earthly sorrow was ever like to his sorrow, who
seeing the heavens that were opened to the
human spirit, looked down with infinite solicitude
upon its hard imprisonment among the things
of sense; and not only looked, but descends, with

eager hope, to set at liberty them that were
bound,- No other hands have ~~hands whose scars~~ been so skillful
or so strong to break the heavy chains of man's
captive soul; and though he shattered his own
human life against the walls of prejudice and
bigotry that opposed his way, he performed the
sublime task of which he had conceived. His
heroic sacrifice shook those cruel towers from
their foundation, ☒ Through his suffering we have
our present liberty as children of the spirit; by
his stripes we are healed.-

Why do we yet hold up before our minds
that scene on Calvary, and look again and
again to the awful tragedy there enacted?
Not alone that we may learn to be properly
grateful to him, who, beneath the mercy of God
is our greatest benefactor; and not at all, to assure
ourselves that the whole debt of humanity has
been paid. We thus remind ourselves of truths

that are forever slipping out of our regard.
Those silent lips tell us that above all other goods
which we can seek, or heaven can bestow, the
truest possessions of righteousness and love and
faith are worth the purchase, even of blood and tears.
They tell us that whatever shame, or ridicule or
~~misjudgment~~ misjudgment may be poured upon us, to have
helped our soul heavenward, is more than to have
earned the highest praise of men by ~~conformity~~ worship.
~~to~~ their established idols. They tell us that
the utmost sacrifice we are called to make
is little and trifling, compared with those which
greater souls have gladly given, and that we
can have no worthy peace of our own, till we
are willing to pay for the peace of other lives.
They call upon us, to awaken every godlike impulse
in our souls; to ~~put~~ throw away our fear of being
cheated and ~~despised~~ despoiled and bring forth the talent we

have hidden, that it may be put to useful service; to know that there is something more of the existence God has conferred upon us than we can touch or taste by cowful seclusion of ourselves in some private nook of safety; and to ~~send forth~~ give ourselves through trust, and sympathy and longing hope, through whatever labor or anxiety the hour demands, to the work of God's spirit in the hearts of men,— Above all — the figure of the crucified Christ, never so much a king as in the hour of his humiliating defeat, is given to assure us that the light of the spirit is everywhere and forever unquenchable; — and that every flame of its kindling, whatever deluge of evil may beat upon it, and however they may suffer who stand about its altars, shall burn as the sun, through all the tempests that arise against it, and prove itself the one true source of life and glory for the souls of men.